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# THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

CONTINUING "THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER"

FEBRUARY 1918

## EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

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The Treasury Department of the United States has organized a plan for gathering up the small savings of the nation. The plan is a war measure, but its influence will doubtless reach far beyond the period of the war. The plan is described by those who have it in charge as a thrift campaign.

### War Savings Stamps

For many years foreign governments, especially the French government, have made it possible for their people to deposit their savings with the government by purchasing government certificates of small denomination. In this country the government has issued its bonds only in large denominations.

The Liberty Loans were sold in fairly small denominations because it was recognized that the vast sums of money needed for the war must not be drawn out of business, where it is needed to keep industry going, but must be obtained through the savings of the people.

Now come the War Savings Stamps. These are for small savings. The hope is that in the aggregate they will bring to the Treasury two billions of dollars. The stamps can be purchased at any post-office and at hundreds of other agencies which have been set up in stores and schools. The Thrift Stamps cost twenty-five

cents apiece. When sixteen have been secured they can be converted by a small additional payment into War Savings Stamps. After five years the War Savings Stamps mature. At maturity they pay 4 per cent interest compounded quarterly. In the interval they can be cashed at any post-office and will pay somewhat over 3 per cent interest.

Teachers have an opportunity to render a service to the country and also to the children by calling attention to these stamps. The government needs to secure an average of twenty dollars each from every man, woman, and child in the United States if this loan is to be a complete success. Every purchase of a twenty-five-cent stamp will help to win the war.

The following letter has been addressed by the Committee on Public Information, Washington, D.C., to school officers throughout the United States:

**Information on  
the War**

The Committee on Public Information has issued and will issue during the coming year a series of booklets bearing upon the War and America's part in it.

In co-operation with the Commissioner of Education, we are planning to place in the hands of every school teacher throughout the United States copies of these publications.

This is the first step of a campaign to secure the aid of the educational forces of the country in the promotion of a clear and intelligent understanding of the War. Your co-operation will be one of the principal features in making this a success.

The publications of the Committee should be in the hands of teachers. There is information in these publications about the organization of the Army and the Navy, about the statements of foreign governments and their policies, about our Congress and the laws which it has passed. In short, there is information on the topics on which every patriotic citizen, and especially teachers, should be intelligent.

The publications are being distributed with the aid of the Commissioner of Education. If teachers do not receive copies, they should write to the Committee in Washington.

Schools have had a serious time during the past few weeks. Along with the industries of the country they have been closed because of lack of coal or for the purpose of conserving the supply.

**Schools and  
Coal**

There is one point which it is worth while to make with emphasis. The essential industries were allowed to keep open. The schools should be classified with the essential industries. It is not a trivial matter to the home or to the community that schools should be closed, and certainly the school is not to be treated as in any sense a nonessential.

The case is somewhat different where schools were closed because of shortage rather than as a measure of conservation of the supply. In such cases it is not too much to ask that the loss be made good in the warm weather.

The experience of England and Canada and France is unequivocal in this matter. Schools must be kept open. Where this is not done juvenile delinquency increases and in the long run the country pays more than it saves.

Every agency which has to do with the welfare of children in this country must be alert to see that the necessity of keeping schools going even in the face of difficulties is held clearly before the American people. It is fatally easy to give up one week of school and then another without foresight for the evil consequences which follow. The children and the teachers are distracted by such interruptions. The course of study breaks down and the pupils get a false view of the seriousness and importance of what they are doing. School officers should make it their business to see that the war does not abridge educational opportunities.

From various parts of the country comes the report that the supply of teachers is inadequate. One normal school received a telegram some days ago from a neighboring county superintendent saying, "Send six teachers at once. No questions asked." The form of this message suggests that keeping school rather than educating the children may be accepted as the full duty of a district during these strenuous times.

**Lack of  
Teachers**

Another line of action which it may be wise to consider on a large scale is the employment of married women, especially those who in the earlier years of their lives have had some experience in teaching. The original school of Pestalozzi was a school conducted by an intelligent mother. The country can properly look on any school as a co-operative method of bringing up its children. Why not put together all these lines of thought and set up a co-operative school where some intelligent mother in the community helps all by the service she can render?

The difficulties, of course, will affect first the rural schools, and gradually the small towns and cities will feel the effects. School committees will have to face the fact that they must enter into competition for the retaining of such teachers as there are or they will have to devise some such new supply as is suggested in the last paragraph.

The economic problem of conducting schools will become an increasingly urgent one as the war goes on. It has been suggested that our states help meet the problem by paying normal-school students and in this way recruiting the profession. It is interesting to note that England tried that experiment for years before the war with indifferent success.

The teaching profession is more likely to be made attractive by the development of more permanent and satisfactory conditions in teaching positions. The salaries should be improved. At the same time methods of evaluating services should be devised which guarantee the protection of a teacher and also guarantee to a community the best grade of services which can be secured.

This time when the scarcity of teachers is a very real fact calls for educational statesmanship of a high order. The scarcity should not be made into an opportunity merely for pushing up salaries indiscriminately. The scarcity should be met, as we are these days trying to meet every emergency, with a spirit of willingness to go to the bottom of the whole matter and build a strong foundation. Let us find out how the teaching profession ought to grow and then put forth vigorous efforts to do the right thing at this time when something must be done.

The editors of the periodical entitled *Public Libraries*, published by the Library Bureau, Chicago, announce that the February issue will be devoted to the discussion of school libraries. **School Libraries** This *Journal* has been asked to call the special attention of teachers to this fact and is entirely willing to comply with that request.

The description which accompanies the request indicates that most of the articles are to be written by those who are engaged in conducting high-school libraries rather than elementary-school libraries. Perhaps this is due to the fact that elementary schools in the past have been backward in the development of library facilities. The time has come, however, when every elementary school should have many books other than the textbooks used in class work. Teachers should interest themselves in the methods of selecting and classifying books. Every school should give instruction in the use of a library card catalogue. Pupils who go out of the grades will be prepared in this way to look up information in public libraries. The school will gain also by opening up to pupils a great deal of material related to the course of study which would otherwise not be accessible.

This *Journal* is therefore very glad to give its strongest support to any agency which will promote the development of school libraries and recommends the February issue of *Public Libraries* to the attention of school officers.

If a school cannot have a large collection of books, that should not be accepted as a reason for not having any. Even a small collection, well classified, will do much to train pupils. There is no school which cannot do something in this direction, perhaps with the aid of a parents' association.

The following statement regarding the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary schools is issued by the Bureau of Education:

**Foreign****Languages**

Only 19 cities out of 163 of 25,000 population or over reporting to the Bureau of Education teach foreign languages below the seventh grade of the elementary school, according to a statement

just made public. In 12 of these cities German is the foreign language taught; in three cities German, French, and Spanish are all taught in the elementary grades; in one city German, Italian, and Polish; while in the three remaining cities the languages taught to elementary-school children are French and Spanish, alone or in combination. In a few cities the foreign language is taught in all grades, from the first to the eighth; in others the instruction does not begin until the fifth or sixth grade. The number of elementary-school children taking German ranges from 40 in one city to 22,000 in another.

Few of the superintendents who replied to the Bureau's inquiry favor the teaching of German or any other foreign language in the lower elementary school, though many of them believe thoroughly in foreign-language study for students in higher schools. A California superintendent says: "I was in doubt before the war. I am becoming convinced now that our public schools should teach 'one nation, one language, one flag.' The teaching of a foreign language below the seventh grade is a sentimental hold of the old country on Americans of the second generation." An Illinois superintendent says: "The public schools should not assist in perpetuating a foreign language in the home and foreign viewpoints in the community." An Iowa superintendent is careful to explain that German is taught in the elementary grades in his schools because "German-American grandparents and many parents demand it."

A typical condition is that in Baltimore, Maryland, where the introduction of German as a subject of instruction in elementary schools in 1874 was partly due to the fact that there were a large number of German private schools in which the atmosphere was entirely German. By the introduction of German into the public schools the private schools were eliminated, and the children gradually came under the influence of American ideas. In this city the superintendent reports that "the number of pupils taking German has been reduced so that now German is taught only in a few instances in the seventh and eighth grades." In St. Louis instruction in German in the elementary schools was discontinued in the eighties. In Cincinnati agitation against the continuation of German in the schools has resulted in the reduction of the number of children studying German in the grades from 13,800 in 1916-17 to 7,000 in 1917-18. German has been taught in all grades of the elementary schools of Cincinnati for seventy-six years.

In its statement regarding the situation the Bureau makes the following suggestions: "There is general agreement among educators and public men, both in this country and abroad, that there should be no interference with existing high-school and college provision for the teaching of German; that a knowledge of the German language is more important now than it was before the war. The upper elementary grades, especially where organized in the junior high school, may quite properly offer foreign languages, including German, but educators generally look upon the teaching of foreign languages in the lower elementary grades as of very questionable value."

A conference of men engaged in training manual arts and industrial teachers was held at Columbia, Missouri, in December.

**Conference on** The conference was called by a representative of the  
**the Training of** Bureau of Education at Washington and was intended  
**Industrial** to serve as a clearing house for information covering  
**Teachers** the general problem of teacher training in this particular field. Fourteen Mississippi Valley states were represented.

The program centered around the following topics: "The Smith-Hughes Act as Related to Teacher Training"; "The Examination and Certification of Manual Arts and Industrial Teachers"; "Provision for Practice Teaching in Connection with Industrial Work"; and "Teacher Training Curricula."

The discussion of the Smith-Hughes act was led by Dr. R. J. Leonard, district agent for the Federal Board for Vocational Education. Dr. Leonard cleared up for the members of the conference many of the perplexing questions which have grown out of the provisions and interpretation of the act. The respective powers of state and federal boards were set forth and typical approved state training programs were presented and discussed. The whole discussion indicated a tendency on the part of both federal and district representatives to adapt the provisions of the act to local and state needs rather than to develop a rigid and uniform system. For this reason initiative is being left to local and state authorities rather than to federal and district representatives.

The interest in and the emphasis being given to the development of the general industrial school for cities of 25,000 or under was the center of considerable discussion. It is through this institution that the Federal Board hopes to extend the benefits of the Smith-Hughes act to the small industrial centers of the Mississippi Valley. The development of such an institution will be an easy step from the best type of technical high school, and its extension should stimulate progressive standards for both the training of teachers and schoolroom practice.

The discussion indicated a disposition on the part of those responsible for the training of industrial teachers to insist upon more exacting professional standards than it has been possible to enforce

in the past. If the general spirit of this meeting is to be taken as an indication of future development in the training of industrial and manual arts teachers, it means a demand for professional standards comparable to those being enforced in other departments.

The meeting of Section L, the education section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, is coming to be one of the most important occasions of the year for the presentation of scientific studies of school problems. Although the meetings of the Association were this year somewhat interfered with by the war, a large number of scientific papers was presented. The customary address of the retiring vice-president of Section L had to be omitted this year because of the pressing war duties which kept Dr. Leonard P. Ayres of the Council of National Defense away from the meeting.

The papers presented at the meeting may be grouped into three classes. In the first place, the methods of scientific measurement were themselves subjected to critical examination. Dr. W. A. McCall subjected a piece of work which he had done at an earlier date to a scientific examination in order to find out the reliability of the earlier work. His interesting title was "The Reliability of a Ph.D. Dissertation." A second paper of this class was one by Dr. F. S. Breed, reporting the results of a comparative study of two methods of measuring the understanding of sentences. Dr. Breed showed that reproductions of passages read and answers to questions do not prove to be like methods of measuring the understanding of passages read. The importance of this conclusion is that the scientific student of education must choose his methods of investigation with critical care.

A second group of studies attempted to define more accurately than has hitherto been done the measurable elements in several of the elementary-school subjects. This type of investigation was well illustrated by a number of reports on reading: "Elements in Reading Abilities," by Daniel Starch; "Reading Ability as a Phase of Study Ability," by H. A. Brown; "Diagnosis of Reading Ability," by C. T. Gray. The papers showed that rapid progress

has been made in scientific analysis and a clear definition of the measurable elements in several school subjects.

A third group of studies reported applications made of scientific methods to the selection of appropriate material for the course of study. The following titles give some idea of the type of applications discussed: "Application of the Range of Information Test to the Course in Physiology," by N. M. Grier; "The Content of Courses Dealing with Plant and Animal Life in the Public Schools," by E. R. Downing.

Inasmuch as the American Psychological Association met in joint session with Section L, a number of the reports related primarily to problems in the field of educational psychology. The following titles are typical of the reports of this type: "Estimation of Apperceptive Abilities," by A. F. Bromer; "Part versus Whole Methods in Learning Nonsense Materials," by A. F. Pechstein.